

VZCZCXRO7271
RR RUEHGI RUEHMA RUEHROV
DE RUEHNJ #0066 0241517
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 241517Z JAN 07
FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4827
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS NDJAMENA 000066

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [EAIR](#) [PTER](#) [CD](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: SUDANESE COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT HIJACKED TO N'DJAMENA

¶1. A Sudanese Air West passenger aircraft reportedly en route from Khartoum to El Fasher and Niyalla January 24 was hijacked by a young Sudanese man and diverted to N'Djamena.

The Minister of Public Security, s chief of staff, who was at N'Djamena Airport when the aircraft arrived around 10:30 this morning, told the Regional Security Officer that the hijacker was armed with a handgun and a knife and that all 103 passengers and 9 crew aboard the aircraft were unharmed. The hijacker is in the custody of Chadian National Security Agency (ANS) officers.

¶2. Embassy consular, regional security and office of the defense attache officers visited airport following arrival of the hijacked aircraft and established that none of the passengers or crew aboard were U.S. citizens. Embassy officers saw the passengers in the airport departure lounge where Chadian authorities had grouped them for questioning and processing.

¶3. Chadian officials credit USG anti-terrorism training as instrumental in their prompt reaction and handling of this case. The Chief of Staff of the Ministry of Public Security, Abdramane Assane Boudina, who attended ATA Senior Crisis Management course in Washington, D.C., was on the scene and actively engaged. He told embassy officers that the actual hijacking scenario was the mirror image of a mock incident dealt with in the course. He said that as soon as he learned the plane would be landing in N'Djamena, he put into action the skills he had learned -- setting up a security perimeter, getting hostage negotiators to the scene and alerting relevant law enforcement branches of the situation. Chadian response measures also included deployment of an explosives (EOD) expert who had attended the Department, s Explosive Incident Countermeasures Course.

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